

Chapter 1

What is the Mining Program?

1.1 Overview of Chapter 1

The Mining Program is the program of research that has been planned and executed with a top-level goal to reduce occupational fatalities, injuries, and illnesses in mine workers. The program has the following characteristics:

- there are seven strategic goals, each of which contributes to achievement of the top-level program goal;
- the major gaps or barriers associated with each strategic goal are identified and used to constitute intermediate goals;
- new projects are developed and approved, based on their contribution to the accomplishment of an intermediate goal;
- project decisions are guided by a "critical path approach," i.e. the most direct path between research projects, intermediate goals, and strategic goals;
- resource allocation is guided by the overall state of the top-level goal, and, to a lesser extent, by progress towards strategic and intermediate goals, in an effort to optimize the overall program rather than individual strategic areas of the program; and
- there are performance measures to provide meaningful targets for researchers and to assess progress toward intermediate and strategic goals.

Mining research within the Institute began transitioning into this program-based approach in 2000. The strategic goal areas were originally called program areas, and intermediate goals were called overarching goals of the program area. With the advent of PART¹ in 2003, the terminology was changed to strategic and intermediate goals, and performance measures were formalized. It is important to note that this transition to sector- and outcome-based programs is ongoing within the Institute, and has not been fully completed for the mining program.

Research projects that will directly or indirectly benefit mineworkers can be found throughout NIOSH. Some of these projects are part of an integrated program of respiratory disease studies, while others are part of a program of research in personal protective technologies. The majority of the projects focuses on the development of safety and health interventions, and is concentrated at the Pittsburgh and Spokane Research Laboratories. These projects are the ones that have been fully integrated into the "program" format. Accordingly, the information presented on this web site is not an inventory of all NIOSH projects that may ultimately impact the safety and health of mineworkers. Rather, it focuses on those projects that were planned as a program of research in mining. Notwithstanding, many of these other projects are highlighted at appropriate points in this review. However, the basis for those projects as well as evidence of

their impact will be presented in their Program Reviews, rather than as part of this Mining Program. At the staff level, collaborations run throughout the Institute, even though the major facility assets for conducting much mining research exist only within the Pittsburgh and Spokane Laboratories.

The Mining Research Plan, presented in this chapter, defines the scope of the mining program through the seven strategic goals. The choice of the strategic and intermediate goals was driven by the needs of the customers and stakeholders and surveillance data. The following sections describe the basis for the Mining Research Plan.

¹ PART, the Program Assessment Rating Tool, was developed to assess and improve program performance so that the Federal government can achieve better results. A PART review helps identify a program's strengths and weaknesses to inform funding and management decisions aimed at making the program more effective. The PART therefore looks at all factors that affect and reflect program performance including program purpose and design; performance measurement, evaluations, and strategic planning; program management; and program results. Because the PART includes a consistent series of analytical questions, it allows programs to show improvements over time, and allows comparisons between similar programs.